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THE PRIME TIME PLUS(+) MEGACHURCH

Kenn Sanders

Courtesy of Church Growth Today

Kenn Sanders is a researcher and master planning specialist for growing church of all sizes since 1955.

He has served as church consultant to several large U.S. churches; served as an architectural designer for Church enterprise, South Bend, Indiana (1960-62); architectural designer for Church Growth Services of South Bend, Indiana (1968-78); and is now an independent consultant since organizing Ministry Reality in 1979.

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Our mission as Christians is to disciple the community for Christ. But before we can minister effectively in our cities, we must take a look inside our own church campuses. Our church members need to attend both the worship service and Sunday school in order for them to attain the biblical knowledge and Christian perspective that will armor them for their discipling. Therefore, our objective as church planners is to motivate our congregation's attendance, in addition to researching the reasons why the members may currently only be staying for one service. The time needs to be taken to learn what will work for appropriate plan be devised. It is our job to be innovative with our plans. We

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shouldn't imitate other facilities, realizing that what works for one group may not work for another. Each church is a people who celebrate Christ's presence, cultivate Christ's life, care for Christ's people and communicate Christ's love in their own community.

Since I first started working with churches in 1955, I have seen incredible changes. In those days our goal was to have 95% of those who attended the worship service attend the Sunday School as well. Now in the 90's, church staffs tell me they are happy to have 50% of the worship service in Sunday School. Such changes have created the demand for a new system and the Prime Time Plus+ Megachurch was born! This church must take the lead role in helping to facilitate the development of the total person in Jesus Christ. Its potentialities are inexhaustible since it puts faith into exercise, making it easier for congregations to grow mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually. Let's take a closer look at what we are to design the Prime Time+ Megachurch to offer.

Through my studies on church planning, I have found that churches which were having three or four services on Sunday morning immediately increased their attendance by 20% after building new facilities on their present site. These new facilities enabled them to have two prime time services between 9 A.M. and noon. Services during these hours are found to be more desirable to members, and they allow for a better distribution of workers. (Versatility is the key in today's church.) Two services are good stewardship of time and money. For instance, a church of 10,000 members needs only the worship space for 4,500 and the education space for 2,500 adults and youth, and 3,000 children.

The breakdown for a Prime Time+ Megachurch is portrayed in the following scenario. Imagine a church which has 60+ acres to build a campus that must be designed to handle 10,000 people. Due to the church's quick growth, the facility must be able to grow with the people (that includes their cars!) It is decided that the church will have two services (each including both worship and Sunday school) at 9 A.M. and 10:45 A.M. After proper planning, the church is built and research finds that 70% of those who attend the 9 A.M. hour stay for the 10:45 A.M. hour, while 30% leave after the first service and 30% arrive on site for the second service. This new facility has now enabled an additional 30% to attend services, grand totaling 13,000 people, while saving money in construction costs at the same time.

While tight finances are another reality of this age, and of great concern to building committees, they do not suppose the need for a church that can be easily managed by its members. Size does not necessarily mean success and some of today's poorly designed megachurches have become failures. All pastors and elders I speak with agree that while home is to be our priority, the church can sometimes destroy that home life. Take for example the church facility that is the least expensive in town. It may very well be riddled with internal

problems! Due to this campus' layout, the staff must put in many extra evening and weekend hours, thus spending large amounts of time away from their families. In the age of the double-income family, days are already jammed full: father to work, children to school, and mother to work (or her myriad of activities). Evening dinners and Saturdays may be the only times the family gets to see each other, only to find one member missing because he is working at church.

This is a genuine concern for the Prime Time+ Megachurch and needs to be carefully reviewed before plans are made. For while we may truly believe that the family is ordained of God, we may not be respecting the family's rights when we create a church which requires extraneous work. Even though they are intended for the best, many times the new programs we create as a church need hours of set-up and tear-down, forcing a husband/father staff member to be unnecessarily away from his family. Stresses in megachurches can develop and run over into the lives of staff members and workers.

These problems make it very clear that being good stewards goes beyond just the building's costs, but delves further into the very lives the building is designed to bring together. Dollars are not appropriately saved if they are contributing to the destruction of family life! Buildings are tools. Laying out the project properly is the responsibility of the staff and elders. They must think through the time, talents, and abilities that each activity requires.

In order for the Prime Time+ Megachurch to be 100% effective, its programs need to be given a long hard look. It is my recommendation that the church elders prepare an in-depth study of the activities each department does, not only on Sunday mornings, but during the week as well. This group is called the Campus Development Team. Each person has a specific role on this team, and a chairman is elected to oversee the process. The key factor in making this process work is commitment. It is the team's task to define the ministry's purpose, program and people. Finally, the team needs to uphold a promise to the congregation through communication and prayer. They will be living out the hymn, "I Walked Today Where Jesus Walked." The member is separately assigned to a staff person, allowing him to "live the life" each individual leads in the church for one week. In addition to being an eye-opener, this will enable them to better understand the changes and plans which need to take place. Jesus said your plan will be established if you seek the counsel of many, so listen to what the staff tells you.

As an aid for the team, I have devised a ten-point checklist for reviewing programs and facilities:

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1. Prime Time: When will the program be? (Day of week, time of day) Is the program held at a time when the maximum number of people can attend?
2. Program: What is the program?
3. Purpose: What is the purpose of the program?
4. People: For what age group is the program targeted?
5. Props: What equipment will be needed to produce the program?
6. Preparation: How much time will be needed to prepare the room for the program?
7. Post Time: How much time will be needed to remove the equipment from the room?
8. Per Person: How many square feet are needed for each person?
9. Physical Plant: How many people will attend? What is the room size?
10. Provision: Where will the funds for this program come from?

After deciding the facilities needs, the Campus Development Team needs to consider what their design philosophy will be. This philosophy includes the impression that the appearance of the worship center sends to the community. Again, since each church is unique, the architecture chosen should be inspirational, while respecting the resources available.

Perhaps you feel your church's situation needs investigation using these methods, but as an individual you feel overwhelmed, not knowing where to start. Have faith and remember what is said in Luke 14:28 and I Kings 6:38, "I commit my works to the Lord...my purpose (works) is to build a house for the name of the Lord my God...according to all its specifications...desiring to build I first sit and calculate the cost, whether I have sufficient means to finish it...I give according to my means...and beyond...but first I give of myself to the Lord...without counsel, my plan will go awry, but in the multitude of counselors my plan is established."

The Prime Time+ Megachurch needs the right staff, program, and facility to meet and master the ministry of the church. As the years pass, our lives become increasingly complex. It is our job, as those who will plan the church,

to make the facility accessible for its congregation and to fulfill its purpose - honoring God by helping people grow and go with God.

Inspirational Architecture

Successful architecture for the celebration of worship sends a message, embodies values, stimulates growth, satisfies the needs and concerns of the community, respects resources, and engages all of the senses.

- Message:** Each congregation is unique. Successful architecture captures that uniqueness in the nature and quality of the congregation's public worship spaces. It answers the question, "What kind of message do you want your celebration space to convey?"
- Values:** Each congregation is distinguished by a set of shared values. Successful architecture embodies the values and convictions of the congregation. It answers the question, "How does the celebration space affirm the values of the congregation?"
- Growth:** Each congregation occupies a special place in its larger community. Successful architecture addresses the concerns of the larger community in which it is located. It answers the question, "How does the celebration space demonstrate its concern and consideration for the needs of its neighbors?"
- Needs:** Each congregation occupies a special place in its larger community. Successful architecture addresses the concerns of the larger community in which the church is located. It answers the question, "How does the celebration space demonstrate its concern and consideration for the needs of its neighbors?"
- Resources:** Each congregation has projected financial resources and potentials. Successful architecture uses materials, services, and technology...and creative problem solving...to achieve building goals within established budgets. It answers the question, "How do we demonstrate good stewardship in the creation of the celebration space?"

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Senses: Each congregation affects and is effected by its celebration space. Successful architecture addresses all the principles and elements of art and architectural form...design, balance, contrast, proportion, light, shape, style, sound and color...so that the form of the art is consistent with the aesthetic sensibilities of the congregation and the community. It answers the question, "How does the celebration space engage all the senses of the congregation?"